

Anime-Maniacs

Aggime focuses on growing popularity of Japanese animation

By TRAVIS IRBY
Staff writer

Anime, Japanese Manga. It has many names, but Japanese Animation has a growing legion of fans, who are looking to make it Japan's biggest pop-cultural export.

Aggime is a common term used to describe the anime style of animation.

Anime has long been a huge industry in Japan as far back as the '60s with science fiction programs like "Astro Boy" and "Star Blazers."

Shows like "Speed Racer" and "Robotech" have been airing in America for years.

Although anime may be identified by many people as being science fiction oriented, fans will find out the medium is used to tell a variety of stories from high drama to light comedy.

In Japan, anime has spawned hundreds of television series and movies. Only recently, however, has America started to embrace this art form.

Local video stores have sections devoted solely to anime. Fulllength animated features like "Akira" and "Ghost in the Shell" have experienced theatrical release.

The fan base is particularly strong in colleges, with many students devoting clubs and web pages to their favorite works.

Texas A&M has its own devoted group of anime-maniacs. The group is called Aggime and offers free screenings of anime movies and shows.

Bryan Melcher, president of Aggime and a senior management major, got involved with the group his freshman year.

"I have always been a fan of anime," Melcher said. "So it was a natural thing to do."

Melcher said the group usually draws anywhere from 20 to 40 people to its screenings held Monday nights at the Learning Resources Department on the sixth floor of Sterling C. Evans Library.

"Many times people will bring something from their own personal collection to share with the group," Melcher said.

Melcher said there are some stereotypes many associate with anime.

"People think anime is a bunch of guys watching robots with big guns," Melcher said. "It couldn't be further from the truth. Anime has a lot of female fans and realistic plot lines."

Anita Tong, Aggime member and a senior journalism major, agrees with Melcher.

"Anime is the way to make movies in Japan, it isn't just girls with big eyes and guns," Tong said. "There are sub genres aimed at all age groups and genders."

Tong said two of those sub genres are Hentai and Shojo.

"Hentai is very extreme in terms of sexuality and violence, it tends to have more of a shock value," Tong said. "Shojo is aimed primarily at women and is usually created by women."

Melcher said there are enough different varieties to accommodate most tastes.

"There is sci-fi, fantasy, action, comedy, drama and everything in between," Melcher said.

Tong said her friends have developed a taste for anime.

"One of my friends will borrow one episode of

a series and then they'll ask to borrow the rest," Tong said.

Businesses in Bryan-College Station are trying to meet the demand for anime.

BCS Books and Games offers a selection of anime to rent. BCS employee John Roark said the store's selection started from his passion for the medium.

"We basically started carrying anime because I wanted to watch it," Roark said.

"The store started out carrying a few titles, but they became popular real fast," Roark said. "Now we have two walls filled with titles."

Roark said the customers range from new fans to those who have associated with anime much longer.

"We have students from Japan and other Asian countries come in," Roark said. "They really enjoy being able to get a hold of Anime, as they have been around it their whole life."

Large chain stores are also getting on the anime bandwagon.

Susan Westbrook, a manager at Hastings, said anime is one of the most popular sections of the store.

"I started here a year ago and the section was only one small row," Westbrook said. "Now it is two very big rows."

Anime has made the leap from the video shelf to television. Several shows like "Sailor Moon" and "Dragon Ball Z" have been dubbed and put into regular syndication. The Sci-Fi channel regularly show anime.

PLEASE SEE AGGIME ON PAGE 4.



A&M student makes Seventeen model search

By MARIUM MOHIUDDIN
Staff writer

Little girls dream about it, big girls try to attain it, and only a few actually achieve it. The modeling industry has grown since the '60s with the first supermodel Twiggy. Today, America is just as captivated with models such as Claudia Schiffer and Naomi Campbell as they were then.

It requires many photographs and a lot of leg work. However, there are many model searches allowing girls to get a small break into the world of modeling.

Seventeen magazine holds such a search. The winners of this search will grace the pages of this November's issue of Seventeen. Among the eight finalists chosen from this year's contest, one is a Texas A&M student.

Christina Liang, a finalist in the Seventeen magazine model search and a freshman biomedical science major, said entering the search was a spontaneous decision.

"I was walking through the mall one

day with my friends and we saw a flier for the search," Liang said. "They said I should try so I turned in my application with only four casual photographs."

"I have received many compliments in high school about being pretty and I was voted 'Most Beautiful', but I have never modeled."

After turning in her application in February, Liang was notified in March that she had made the top 100. An estimated 25,000 girls had applied. By May, Seventeen had informed her she was in the top eight.

"They flew us to New York for four days and we stayed in Manhattan," Liang said. "It was like a field trip. We had a makeover, manicures and tours around New York."

Liang said the attention they drew in New York was flattering.

"When we were walking around New York we were wearing T-shirts saying that we were finalists in the Seventeen model search," Liang said. "Many people stopped us and asked if they could take pictures with us. It was glamorous."

The girls also were able to meet Matt

King, a professional model who has worked for such designers as Ralph Lauren.

Liang said the four days were highly enjoyable, but it was also a lot of tiring work.

"The schedule was rigorous," Liang said. "Our days lasted from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. It was tiring and most of the girls would sleep on the set."

Liang said the photo shoots were fun, but at the same time, they allowed the girls to view a different side of modeling.

"For the photo shoots, the girls were divided into two groups of four," Liang said. "Taking photos was not hard. The photographer was great. She would tell us exactly what to do. It was very relaxed and casual and I felt professional."

Liang said shooting in the middle of the summer was a challenge.

"It was weird because we were taking photographs for the November issue in the summer," Liang said. "We had to wear thermals and pretend that we were cold. We all were sweating. It was also a shiny shoot so they put Vaseline on our faces so we would shine."

Liang said the carefree images the

photos depict are not as easy to achieve as they might seem.

"They do a lot of things to make the clothes in the photographs look better," Liang said. "They would pin them back so they would form to our bodies and not look baggy. For one girl they used the whole box of pins to make the clothes look nice."

The magic of makeup and hairspray can transform a person into the next supermodel.

"There was one girl who looked like me—very casual," Liang said. "When she came out of makeup she looked completely different. She looked gorgeous."

Liang said she was anxiously waiting the release of the magazine.

"I was waiting a long time to see the edition, and I could not find it anywhere," Liang said. "One day when I was walking in Wal-Mart I saw the magazine and dropped everything I was holding."

Since the magazines have reached newsstands, Liang said she does not feel any different, since most college students do not read Seventeen.

PLEASE SEE LIANG ON PAGE 4.



Christina Liang, a freshman biomedical science major, chosen as a finalist in the Seventeen model search.

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